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HERBERT SPENCER'S LATEST CRITIC.

AN article appeared in the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW for June of last year, written by Professor Isaac L. Rice, and entitled "Herbert Spencer's Facts and Inferences." It purported to be a review of that author's work in the domain of social science, and its avowed object was so to present the subject "that the reader may be enabled to form an opinion concerning the trustworthiness of Mr. Spencer's data and the value of his inductions; and to judge whether the social theories based largely on these data and inductions on the one hand, and on dogmatic assertions on other, are or are not tainted with fallacies." Mr. Rice then proceeds to the somewhat ambitious task of destroying Mr. Spencer's reputation as a thinker by showing that neither in his facts, nor in his inferences from them, is he entitled to the confidence of his readers.

We read the article at the time of its publication with some surprise at its assurance, but with an impression that its obviously bad spirit would so far put readers on their guard against its arraignments as to make any formal reply to it superfluous. But we have since been repeatedly reminded that the appearance of such accusations, however really groundless they may be, in the pages of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, makes necessary an answer; because, if uncontradicted, it will be generally assumed that they are incapable of contradiction. Yielding to this view, we now propose to examine the article of Mr. Rice and to exemplify to the readers of the REVIEW his qualifications as a critic of Mr. Spencer.

The object of Mr. Rice's article is to discredit the work of that author as, in both its facts and its inferences, unworthy of trust, and he begins by saying that two methods of criticism are open to him. First: "I may attempt to cover the whole of the vast field which he traverses and confine myself to general state-

ments more or less vague"; the implication being that if he follows this method he will find abundant proofs of sophistry, dogmatism, and facts and inferences that cannot be trusted. But another method is also open to him, and, "preferring to be precise," he will adopt it and "restrict himself to special points." We certainly commend the method adopted.

Mr. Rice's first "point" is somewhat sweeping in its consequences, being nothing less than to impeach Mr. Spencer's capacity to understand the books he quotes. He says, "It is important to note, at the outset, that he does not always correctly apprehend the authors to whom he refers." This goes to the root of the matter; because, if Mr. Rice can substantiate this charge, "at the outset," it will be quite needless for him to proceed further. If incompetent to apprehend the authorities he cites, Spencer's works must of course be worthless.

The issue is made up on the interpretation of Plato. Mr. Rice calls in question Mr. Spencer's statement respecting the comparison Plato makes between reason, will, and passion, in an individual, and counsellors, military or executive, and the commonalty, as parts of a society; saying that this analogy is not stated as Plato states it. Now, that Mr. Rice should take a different view from Mr. Spencer of what Plato means is not altogether surprising; since, out of the confused and incoherent statements in the "Republic," meanings considerably different may be drawn, according as one or other passage is taken, or according as one or other meaning is given to a word. But that Mr. Spencer's interpretation of Plato's view is a quite justifiable one is proved by the fact that this is the view taken by the translator of the "Republic," in Bohn's Classical Library—a standard authority. In his general introduction, pp. 19–23, Mr. Davis, the translator, says:

"The Republic of Plato is a development of the analogy between the ideas of the perfect man and the perfect State. * * He opens the inquiry with a kind of analysis of the human mind, which he divides into three parts,—first, the rational or reasoning principle (*τὸ λογιστικόν*); secondly, the spirit or will (*τὸ ἰσχυρὸν* or *ἰσχυρῶδες*); and thirdly, the appetite or passion (*τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν*); which last, however, indicates nothing beyond that vital impulse which leads from one sensation to another. * * * He then proceeds to classify the members or parts of his ideal Republics. These he classes under three heads or divisions, corresponding with the faculties of the soul,—viz., 1. The *βουλευτικόν* (counsellors), those who employ reason in the

contemplation of what best suits the State; 2. The ἐπικουρικόν, those who aid the βουλευταί with a ready will; 3. The Χρηματιστικόν, who are bent on gain and selfish gratification."

And Mr. Davis quotes from Ritter, in verification of this interpretation, the passage :

"There should be one part to correspond with the reason, to whom the sovereignty is to be committed; a second, answering to spirit, is to assist the sovereign; and lastly, a third part is made parallel to the appetite and intended to supply the bodily wants of the community. These are the three social classes — the ruler, the warrior, and the craftsman" (p. xxiii.)

These passages from two good authorities abundantly warrant Mr. Spencer's statement; the only difference being, that whereas Ritter does not give "will" as a synonym of "spirit," the English translator does so in two places.

But Mr. Rice goes further, and states without any justification that Mr. Spencer misrepresents Plato; namely, in respect of the Platonic view of the authority for right and wrong. Mr. Rice says that in the "Data of Ethics" Mr. Spencer "puts into the mouth of the philosopher, whose great aim is to teach the absolute being of Truth and Justice, the monstrous statement that 'State enactments' are the sources of right and wrong! Words to this effect," he continues, "may indeed be found in the 'Republic,' but they are uttered by Thrasymachus the sophist, and then exposed in all their bareness, and castigated by the unpitying irony of Socrates the philosopher." Now, one who turns to the dialogue will find that the misapprehension is not on the part of Mr. Spencer, but on the part of Mr. Rice. The dispute between Socrates and Thrasymachus (see p. 15 of the translation above named) is whether the "just is something that is expedient" simply, or whether it is that which is expedient to "the more powerful;" and that the disputants do not differ with regard to the authority of the State is shown by a passage on the next page, in which Socrates commences by asking :

"Tell me, do you not say that it is just to obey governors? Yes, I do. Are the governors in the several States infallible, or are they capable of erring? Certainly, said he, they are liable to err. When they set about making laws, then, do they not make some of them right, and some of them wrong? I think so. To make them right, then, is to make them expedient for

themselves; and to make them not right (that is), inexpedient; or how mean you? Just so. And what they enact is to be observed by the governed; and this is what is just? Of course. According to your reasoning, then, it is just to do what is expedient to the stronger, while the contrary is what is not expedient; what say you? Replied he, I am of the same opinion as yourself."

And that Mr. Spencer is not singular in his interpretation of Plato's view of this matter is shown by the fact that the like view is taken by Professor Bain, in his "*Mental and Moral Science*," a text-book used both in American colleges and English universities. On page 472 (first edition) Dr. Bain writes of Plato's ethics:

"The relation of ethics to politics is intimate, and even inseparable. The civil magistrate, as in Hobbs, supplies the ethical sanction. All virtue is an affair of the State, a political institution. This, however, is qualified by the demand for an ideal State, and an ideal governor, by whom alone anything like perfect virtue can be ascertained."

It thus appears that on the first "point" it is not Mr. Spencer, but Mr. Rice, that is discredited. His second has reference to music, and here we might expect he would do better, as he is himself a musician and the author of a book upon the subject. He charges that Mr. Spencer's account of the evolution of music contains absurd misstatements; one of them being with regard to the earliest forms of music. That Mr. Rice should have proposed to instruct Mr. Spencer with respect to the habits of savages is somewhat amusing when we consider that Mr. Spencer has been studying that subject for forty years, and has had collected and tabulated the accounts of some eighty uncivilized races in all parts of the world, while the origin and development of musical art among these races was a distinctive object of the research. Mr. Rice, however, has the hardihood to attack Mr. Spencer on this side of his work, and, as might be expected, Mr. Rice comes to grief.

He quotes Mr. Spencer to the effect that, "as implied by the customs of still extant barbarous races, the first musical instruments were, without doubt, percussive,—sticks, calabashes, tom-toms,—and were used simply to mark the time of the dance." Mr. Rice ridicules this statement, referring to A. W. Ambros as his authority. Now, whether this German writer has examined the comprehensive evidence furnished by the whole of these

eighty races there is no proof; but the evidence when examined shows clearly enough that there are barbarous races that have not "horns, flutes, and stringed instruments" or any instruments beyond the percussive. And these races are the very lowest, as Mr. Spencer's argument alleges.

Of the Tasmanians Lloyd says ("Tasmania and Victoria," p. 60) that, "in their *corrobaru* they accompany a monotonous chant with beating on a kangaroo skin rolled up; also with beating on two sticks." So, too, of the Australians, whose women during the dances sing and keep time "by beating with sticks on their skin cloaks, done up into tight bundles" ("Travs. Eth. Soc.," New Ser., iii., p. 257). Another statement is that their music is of the simplest kind—striking on the ground, on another stick, on their skin cloaks rolled up, on a stretched skin. The dances of the Andamanese are performed "to the time of a song which is kept up by one man, the women clapping their hands loudly and joining in the chorus. The time is often beaten on what we call a dancing-board; that is, a hollow piece of hard wood, in the form of an ancient shield, which, being placed on the ground, with the hollow downward, is stamped by one of the party, who keeps it steady by placing the other foot on the pointed end" ("St. John, Travs. Eth. Soc.," New Ser., v., p. 46). And among the Damaras, we find interestingly shown the transition from the percussive instrument to the stringed. Says Galton (p. 192): "Their only musical instrument is their bow. They tie a piece of reim round the bow-string and the handle and bind them up tight together; then they hold the bow horizontally against their teeth, and strike the tense bow-string with a small stick. A good performer can produce great effect with it. They attend more to the rhythm than the notes, and imitate with its music the galloping or trotting of different animals to perfection." "A very poor idea of music exists among the Nagas, and it is never practiced except in dancing, where it serves to mark the time. A rude, monotonous song is chanted by the whole company, and eked out with the clapping of hands, both on the part of the dancers and spectators" ("Stewart, Jour. As. Soc. Bengal," xxiv., 615).

These facts not only verify Mr. Spencer's statement, but show even more clearly than he had done that the rhythm of music, marked at first by sounds that are unsonorous, like clapped hands and clashed sticks, is primary, and that progress

toward the sonorous is through blows on things that vibrate more sensibly than hands, or sticks, or bundles of skins.

Mr. Spencer, arguing that harmony did not grow out of melody by a single leap, pointed out that probably concerted music in general was developed from the fugue.

"The circumstance which prepared the way for it was the employment of two choirs singing alternately the same air. Afterward it became the practice (very possibly first suggested by a mistake) for the second choir to commence before the first had ceased; thus producing a fugue. With the simple airs then in use a partially harmonious fugue might not improbably thus result; and a very partially harmonious fugue satisfied the ears of that age, as we know from still preserved examples. The idea having once been given, the composing of airs productive of fugal harmony would naturally grow up, as in some way it did grow up out of this alternate choir singing. And from the fugue to concerted music of two, three, four, and more parts, the transition was easy." ("First Prin.," § 125.)

This Mr. Rice ridicules, saying: "It is as though we should say that the development of the isosceles triangle into a figure of three sides was not attended by difficulties"; the implication of this comparison appearing to be that the fugue began with several parts, for otherwise the declared absurdity does not exist. Now, any one who will turn to Grove's elaborate "Dictionary of Music," still in course of publication, and will read the article "Fugue," by Sir Frederick Gore Ousley, a doctor of music, and professor at Oxford, may, as he reads the earlier part of it, suppose that Mr. Rice's ridicule has some warrant; but he will find toward the close the following passage:

"In Morley's '*Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*,' published in 1597, p. 76, we find the following definition: 'We call that a fugue, when one part begineth and the other singith the same, for some number of notes (which the first did sing), as thus, for example,' (here follows a simple two-part fugue, in which the second voice commences a bar after the first). This we should nowadays call a specimen of simple imitation at the octave, in two parts; yet it is from such a germ as this that the sublime structure of the modern fugue has been gradually developed."

There is therefore definite evidence that the fugue, in its primitive form, had just that simple character which Mr. Spencer affirmed, in which the harmony arose from the repetitions of the same melody, one commenced a bar or more after the other, and that from this simple beginning, as he implies, involved harmo-

nies, fugal and other, grew up. It is obvious that in this matter Mr. Spencer knew what he was talking about, and equally manifest that Mr. Rice knows nothing about it.

Having sampled Mr. Rice's criticism of Mr. Spencer's "facts," let us turn to his criticism of Mr. Spencer's "inferences." Mr. Rice undertakes to reason upon the subject of evolution, and this is his modest position in regard to it. "Thus we have found that the much-quoted 'law of evolution' is no law whatever; that it is not even a tendency subordinate to the human will; nor indeed an induction; nor in any sense a scientific proposition; in short, that it is not the formulation of objective observation, but simply a subjective fancy." This is certainly a pretty large conclusion, but as Mr. Rice says "we have found" it to be true, it will be interesting to note in what way he has arrived at his opinion. The upshot of his reasoning seems to be that there is such a thing as dissolution, which is the opposite of evolution,—as if any evolutionist had ever questioned it. He argues, as many tyros have argued before, that evolution is a false theory because the transformations go both ways. He reasons that if there is a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, there is also a change from the heterogeneous to the homogeneous. Mr. Rice here appeals to authority, saying "that social progress does not always take the form of a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, has already been pointed out by Mr. Cliff Leslie ('Fortnightly Review,' Jan., 1879), who has shown that the movement of 'language, law, and political and civil unions is, for the most part, in an opposite direction.' Mr. Spencer attempts to diminish the force of this criticism by contending that what Mr. Leslie had in mind is a 'progressing unification,' a tendency toward greater coherence and not toward greater homogeneity. But I cannot consider his argument a valid one."

Now, here again we have excellent evidence that Mr. Rice but very imperfectly understands what he is writing about. He quotes an authority, Professor Leslie, a distinguished political economist and writer on social subjects, who had raised objections to Mr. Spencer's generalizations, to which Spencer himself had made reply, but which Mr. Rice regards as not a valid reply. But here comes an issue between Mr. Rice and the authority he appeals to. Professor Leslie, who made the objections, has explicitly retracted them and publicly acknowledged that Mr.

Spencer's reply to them *is* a valid one. Long before Mr. Rice had made use, for his purposes, of Leslie's criticism, Professor Leslie had openly repudiated it. Either Mr. Rice was ill-informed upon the subject, or he chose to quote an opinion disavowed by his own authority. Writing in the "London Academy" for October 23d, 1880, Professor Leslie remarks (p. 287):

"To take another instance (of the close relation of economic science with other branches of sociology), the movement of society designated by Mr. Herbert Spencer as 'from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous,' is highly important in its economical aspects, and the present writer acknowledges that Mr. Spencer's recent reply to some comments of his own on the doctrine so formulated is, in the main, substantially just and sufficient."—(Appendix to "First Principles" dealing with criticisms.)

This deliberate and public acknowledgment of Professor Leslie that he was wrong, is not only an example of rare and admirable candor, but is weighty evidence of the truth of Mr. Spencer's generalization; and, what is of less importance, convicts Mr. Rice either of misrepresenting or of misapprehending "the authors to whom he refers." It will hardly be needful to pursue his review further, as its quality is now sufficiently apparent. There is a good deal of this sort of "crushing" of Herbert Spencer by aspiring literary adventurers which is not worth serious refutation; and the best rule that can be given for judging of such efforts is to ask what the writer has ever done to vindicate his claim to be heard, when he proposes to undermine and overthrow the careful and life-long work of a thinker who has made a profound and lasting impression upon the mind of his age.

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